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SUBJECT: WEEKLY NEPAL MEDIA REPORT FROM JUNE 14 TO 20, 2005

1. POLITICAL AFFAIRS

Maoists positive over seven parties' call: A day after the seven opposition parties called on the Maoists to support their ongoing pro-democracy movement, the CPN (Maoist) Sunday said it had taken their call in a positive light. Issuing a press statement Sunday, Maoist chairman Prachanda said the commitment expressed by the seven-party alliance towards the movement against "autocratic monarchy" and for absolute democracy as well as the election to the constituent assembly was a positive development. Prachanda also made clear that his party was ready for an alliance with the political parties in their ongoing movement while "being committed to the main agendas of the [Maoist] party." "In consideration with the historic demand of the movement against authoritarianism as well as the request of the seven political parties, we hereby give special direction to all organs of the party, the People's Liberation Army and the new people's government, not to carry out physical attack on unarmed persons even if they are criminals," the rebel chieftain declared. (www.nepalnews.com and all dailies 6/20)

7-party alliance issues 'join us' call to Maoists: The seven-party alliance Saturday issued a clear call to the Maoists to "join the mainstream" and adopt a "positive attitude" towards the agitation. After an alliance meet, NC spokesperson Arjun Narsingh KC said, "We have called the Maoists to come to the mainstream." The alliance urged the CPN-Maoist to enunciate a clear stand on a host of issues, including human rights, civil liberties and democratic values. (Pro-India "Himalayan Times," E/D, 6/19, Circulation: over 25,000 and other dailies)

Campaign on to 'bail out' Dr Giri: In order to help Vice-Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Dr Tulsi Giri, repay his bank loan, political parties in the district started a novel campaign to collect money for him. A draft of the collected amount was later sent to Dr Giri via the post office. (Centrist "Kathmandu Post," E/D, circulation: 20,000, 6/14)

Lawyers ask Dr Giri to resign: Lawyers on Monday sought the resignation of vice chairman of the Council of Ministers Dr Tulsi Giri, accusing him of being a willful defaulter of a bank loan. Organizing a protest program against the Kathmandu District Administration Office, which had recently sought an explanation from NBA president Shambhu Thapa for holding a rally in prohibited areas, the lawyers said such a blacklisted person has no right to hold a key government post. (The Himalayan Times, 6/14)

2. MAOIST INSURGENCY

Maoists kill 2 RNA men: Maoists shot dead two RNA soldiers in Aarughat bazaar in Gorkha Saturday afternoon. (Major dailies, 6/19)

Maoists indoctrinate over 250 youths in Gulmi: Maoists on Wednesday forcibly took away more than 250 local youths along with them in Gulmi district to indoctrinate them in their militia campaign. (Media reports, 6/17)

People dying after Feb 1 doubles: The number of people being killed after King [Gyanendra] usurped power on Feb 1 has doubled, reported Kantipur daily Thursday. 271 people were killed during the month of May, while 175 were killed during April, said the report. "Peace outside Kathmandu valley has worsened, though valley is peaceful comparatively," said senior journalist Kanak Mani Dixit, the report added. He said before Feb 1 the people dying everyday was three while six are dying everyday nowadays. (www.kantipuronline.com, 6/16)

AI for blanket ban on military assistance: Amnesty

International (AI) called for suspension of international arms supplies and military assistance to Nepal until Kathmandu takes clear steps to halt rights violations and bring those responsible for them to justice. Releasing a report on Wednesday, AI has accused the international arms suppliers including Britain, India, France, South Africa and Belgium, of fueling serious human rights abuses and the Maoist conflict. (Major dailies, 6/16)

Maoists kill 7 civilians: In yet another case of brutality, Maoists on Monday night killed seven persons including wives of three policemen and an infant in separate incidents in Dhangadhi and Morang districts. (Major reports, 6/15)

8 troops, 8 rebels killed: Fresh clashes between security forces and Maoist rebels in Kavre district, Monday morning, left at least 14 persons - eight security personnel and six rebels - dead, according to the Royal Nepalese Army (RNA). Elsewhere, forces killed two Maoists in security operations. (Media reports, 6/14)

13. PRESS FREEDOM

48 scribes arrested in protest rally: Police personnel intervened in a peaceful protest rally organized by journalists in the government restricted areas of the capital city, manhandled them and arrested 48 of them on Monday. They were released on Tuesday. (Major dailies, 6/14-15)

FNJ decides to boycott cabinet ministers: Federation of Nepalese Journalists unveiled second stage of protests programs including boycotting public meetings of cabinet ministers. The decision was taken by FNJ at its two-day central meeting. FNJ also called on all media persons to boycott Vice-chairman of cabinet Dr. Tulsi Giri and not to publish photograph of government's spokesperson and Information and Communication Minister Tanka Dhakal, for his repressive stand towards the press. The journalists would stage nation-wide sit-in protests on all Sundays for a month. (www.kantipuronline.com, 6/20)

14. OTHERS

RNA asks foreign arms suppliers to provide weapons: After major suppliers of arms to Nepal including India, UK and US suspended their supply of arms citing King's takeover of Feb 1, the government advertised in its state-owned newspaper the Rising Nepal Saturday for international arms manufacturers to provide weapons. (Major dailies, 6/20)

China delivers five APCs: China delivered five Armored Personnel Carriers (APCs) to the Royal Nepalese Army (RNA) on Thursday. Nepal had bought them some time back. The cargo plane has brought military equipment from China, he said and added the equipment include five APCs. Officials, however, are tight-lipped on the delivery. (The Himalayan Times, 6/17)

GDP growth down to 2pc: Bogged down by an unexpected economic downturn in the non-agriculture sector, the growth rate of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at factor cost is likely to fall by around 2 percent - less than half the budgetary target for the current fiscal year. According to a preliminary estimate of Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), the GDP growth rate is likely to remain at 2.1 percent, against the budgetary target of 4.5 percent. The growth of agriculture and non-agriculture sectors for the current year is expected to remain at 2.8 and 1.6 percent against the budgetary target of 3.7 and 4.6 percent respectively. (The Kathmandu Post, 6/17)

Stop arms aid to Nepal: Amnesty International alleged that western governments were flouting their own rules and contributing to what it called grave human rights abuses by selling arms and weapons systems to crisis-torn Nepal. In a strong-worded statement issued on Wednesday, the London-based watchdog accused Britain, India and the United States of supplying thousands of assault rifles to the poor country, which is facing a Maoist insurgency and said Belgium was selling machine guns and South Africa military communications equipment. "With the conflict poised to escalate, any further military assistance would be highly irresponsible," Amnesty said, appealing for a ban on arms sales to the Himalayan kingdom. (www.nepalnews.com, 6/15)

MILLARD